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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001668

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: TAIWAN APEC REPRESENTATIVE ON HU JINTAO MEETING,
CROSS-STRAIT TIES

Classified By: The Director for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary. Although APEC is primarily an economic, and not political institution, Taiwan's representation at this year's summit by a former Vice President was a &breakthrough,8 Lien Chan told the Director December 1. Lien described his meeting with Hu Jintao as another step forward in a gradual relaxation of cross-Straits tensions, and projected movement on Taiwan's bid for participation in the WHO or WHA ahead of the May 2009 meeting. While Lien appears not to enjoy the full confidence of Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou, circumstances will compel the two to continue to work together to ensure their legacies. End Summary.

Lien: Third Hu Jintao Meeting in 2008 a &Breakthrough8

12. (C) KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan, who returned to Taiwan November 28, met with the Director December 1 to give a readout of his participation in the November APEC summit. Lien, who served as Vice President from 1996-2000, noted that he was far and away the highest-ranking former government official to represent Taiwan at an APEC summit. China approved his participation because of the improvement in cross-Straits ties, but also due to his personal relationships with PRC leaders, Lien suggested. While noting that it was possible to exaggerate the importance of such high-level participation in an organization which is primarily economic (i.e., not political) in nature, Lien said it was nevertheless a "breakthrough.8

13. (C) Lien described his participation in the APEC summit as one more step in the gradual improvement in cross-Straits ties which began in 2005 as dialogue between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and which had accelerated since President Ma took office in May 2008. Since Ma took office, for the first time in 60 years the two sides had reached agreements aimed at reaching very practical results that would benefit ordinary citizens on both sides of the Taiwan strait. Lien was &pleasantly surprised8 that he was able to meet bilaterally with PRC President Hu Jintao during the APEC summit, and used the opportunity to compliment Hu on his role in pushing forward cross-Straits rapprochement. That said, it was important not to expect too much, too quickly.

WHO: Encouragement, but No Specifics

14. (C) The Director noted that many saw Taiwan's efforts to gain some form of meaningful participation in the WHO and/or WHA as the next milestone in cross-Straits ties. Lien confirmed that he raised the issue with Hu, but only in very general terms. (Note: This squares with a read-out of the Lien-Hu meeting Taiwan National Security Advisor Su Chi provided the Director on November 28.) In his meeting with

Hu, Lien described Taiwan,s interest in the WHO as transcending politics. East Asia is not at peace with nature,8 he said, noting the floods, earthquakes, plagues and other natural disasters that had ravaged the region in recent years. Including Taiwan in regional and global prevention and response systems is, thus, a matter of survival.

15. (C) Hu,s response was encouraging but ultimately non-committal. For now, the PRC President said, it was important to focus on completing work on agreements reaching during the November visit to Taiwan of ARATS Chairman Chen Yunlin. Once that work is complete, "many other issues" could be discussed. While he made clear that neither he nor Hu discussed specifics, Lien interpreted Hu,s comment as a sign that the PRC would offer some form of progress on WHO/WHA ahead of the May 2009 WHA meeting.

No Messages for Other APEC Leaders

16. (C) Lien reviewed his conversations with other APEC leaders, including President Bush, during the summit. The major issue on regional leaders' minds was the financial crisis and its likely impact on regional economies. For his part, Lien expressed concern about the impact the economic downturn would have on progress towards trade liberalization. Already, the Doha round had bogged down and countries were turning instead to bilateral agreements that worked against broader free trade efforts. Lien,s responses to numerous questions from the Director suggested that President Ma had

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not given Lien specific messages to deliver to other leaders at the meeting.

Comment

17. (C) We take Lien at his word that President Ma did not charge him to deliver messages to other APEC leaders. There has been reported friction between the two KMT leaders, and Lien likely still regards President Ma as serving in an office that, by rights, should have been his. Nevertheless, few on Taiwan enjoy Lien,s access to China,s senior leaders and his selection as APEC representative is one of the clearest signs that Ma,s policy of engagement is bearing fruit. Both realize that their legacies depend, to some extent, on putting aside personal differences in pursuit of their) and what they see as Taiwan,s) larger interests. Indeed, Lien's special role in the cross-Strait relationship will be highlighted again later this month, when he travels to Shanghai to represent the KMT in the third KMT-CCP forum.
SYOUNG